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JAZZ AND POP MUSIC REVIEWS

'Good Noise' at Blackie's

Three bands representing the more demented edge of the L.A. punk scene performed Monday night at Blackie's. For aficionados of "Good Noise," as writer Richard Meltzer describes the school, the bill of Nervous Gender, Monitor and Overman meant bliss. But for anyone who ventured into the small Hollywood club looking for normal rock, or even normal hard-core sounds—like one couple who managed to frug a bit to Overman before fleeing—it was probably quite a shock.

Nervous Gender, augmented this night by the Germs' drummer Don Bowles, were the most decidedly against-the-grain of the bunch. Taking turns on instruments and vocals, the quartet uses its time on stage more to exorcise psychic pain than to play songs.

A heavy dose of dissonant cacophony permeates the music—or anti-music—and a marked obsession with the demonic figure of "Mommy" dominates most of the shouted lyrics. Led by androgynous singer-guitarist Phranc, the group looks almost as freakish as it sounds. Only for the most adventurous.

The same brave crowd would be most likely to appreciate Monitor, but the Northridge quartet is somewhat more accessible and considerably more enjoyable. Stark, experiemental and not overly melodious, the band nevertheless features several intriguing, playful touches: unusual vocal arrangements that have the singers playing off each other, some alternatingly compelling and grating rhythmic textures, humorous instrumental references (as on the Dick Dale-like "Surfadelic") and aberrant lyrics—one song is about a pet wedding, another considers spontaneous combustion.

Of the three groups, Overman was the closest to being a customary rock band and the farthest from being impressive. Its sound is much fuller and more technically skilled than the other outfits', and includes a cello and some fairly engaging passages, particularly when it attempts hypnotic, quirky rhythms. But too often the group opts for a dull, outdated approach reminiscent of '60s psychedelia.

Nervous Gender will be at El Capulin Anticlub (4658 Melrose Ave.) tonight.

—TERRY ATKINSON

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